

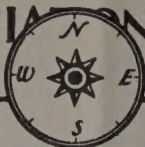
# The COMPASS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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## Professional Standards in Social Work

By DOROTHY C. KAHN

PROFESSIONAL standards is not a static concept. Each year of our professional life adds content, scope and meaning to this term. There has probably never been a year in the Association's history when its chief concern was so difficult to discuss. For on the one hand, we have seen social work threatened, attacked and even badly represented and on the other we have seen skills adapted to the most difficult situation, and have watched social work in its very best tradition being practiced by increasing numbers of persons in obscure places and under all but impossible conditions. There is not time to review the path along which we have come. For perspective let us refer to the previous annual reports of this Association. To me they stand as markers of our progress and pointers to the road ahead. This is the aim also of this statement.

The outstanding fact of this year in social work is the attacks on social workers and their clientele, on professional standards from without and—I regret to say—from within. What is the background of these attacks and what do they mean? These questions must be answered thoughtfully before we can forecast their results. In the span of less than a decade we have moved from the concept of philanthropy as basic in social work to the reality of taxation, from the age when the poor were permitted, as in biblical times, to "glean the corners of the field," to an era of social

responsibility. To be sure, the gleanings are still pitifully small, but the method is basically different. No one with any awareness of history can deny this. The ingenious editors of *The Family* have decorated their June cover with the following quotation by George Bernard Shaw:

It is perhaps the greatest folly of which a nation can be guilty to attempt to use poverty as a sort of punishment for offenses that it does not send people to prison

for. . . . We cannot afford to have poor people anyhow—whether they be lazy or busy—drinking or sober—virtuous or vicious—thrifty or careless—wise or foolish—it is a public nuisance as well as a private misfortune. Its toleration is a national crime.

This is the hard-boiled realism that underlies current social work. Is it any wonder that its advocates are subjected to attack by those whose privilege it has been to give or withhold, to indulge or to punish?

And this very process has been inevitably accompanied by movement from the protections supposedly

afforded by a selected constituency into the open field of government service with the peculiar traditions of American party politics. To be sure, certain types of government service have been marked off for the qualified versus the faithful followers, but this has, in every instance, been the result of a test of strength. Several factors have contributed to deferring this test in relation to social work until the present movement, although

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preliminary skirmishes have been fought and won during the last quarter of a century. Probably the most potent of these factors of delay has been a realization that these thousands of new "jobs" were no sinecures. Moreover they were not "plums" from the point of view of salary. The second factor—now noticeably on the wane—was the realization by the more sagacious politicians that the emergency program was political dynamite, and therefore to be conspicuously marked *do not touch*. The forfeit of this healthy attitude began with accusations that the other fellow was playing politics with human misery. As one distinguished layman has put it, accusations of this kind are clear evidence of the wish that the claim were the fact. As we settle down to an acceptance, however unwilling, of the permanence of this expanded government responsibility, the inevitable battle for qualified personnel must be fought. That it did not emerge much earlier is the only really surprising thing about it. Are we ready professionally for this battle—not only to protect the standards we have achieved, but to project them effectively into the new areas we find ourselves occupying, and to refine them to meet new needs? I believe we are. Let us see.

First we need to cast up our gains and losses. To do this in a short space we cannot go too far back, nor attempt an inclusive list. If we did it would be more impressive than was Kenneth Pray's description of the state of social work at the time of the founding of the Pennsylvania School of Social Work. But let us look just at the last year or so. However inadequate or ineffective we may think the specific measures to be, we have at least an acceptance of the idea of social security as a concept to be translated into Congressional action. We have the incorporation into relief programs of medical and nursing care, an acceptance of the principle that starvation shall not be the determinant in an industrial dispute, that relief in cash on a budgetary basis including shelter as an essential item is neither visionary nor impossible of administration. We have the beginnings of merit systems in emergency set-ups, registration of social workers in some places and a definite acceptance of social work training and qualifications for certain positions. Certainly we are not satisfied with any of these as to their content or scope, but we cannot honestly disregard them as steps in the march of progress merely because they are not good enough. Moreover, we have the ear of an enormously enlarged public, not a few of whom have achieved an understanding of social work principles which could never have come about in any ordinary way. Not the least of these are the clients of public

agencies who are so often represented as merely tolerating, if not wholly rejecting, the activities of social workers.

In Philadelphia as an answer to some of these attacks which I have been talking about, we are now enjoying an objective investigation of our investigating progress. One criterion of it was that these investigators should not be social workers. We have had some interesting comments on the situation from our clientele. One woman reported to her visitor on her experience with an investigator. She said, "This man came to see me and he seemed so embarrassed and didn't know what questions to ask me, so I asked him some questions. He was a chemist, what do you think of that? He was a very nice young man, but honest, Miss Jones, he don't know nothing!"

We have had an opportunity to contribute to the work of the President's Committee on Economic Security (even though we did not succeed in incorporating all of our ideas in the final product). We have led the movement to defend fellow social workers under indictment for performing their plain duty honestly.

On the other hand we have seen social work diluted by the introduction into its ranks of vast numbers of inexperienced and untrained persons, some of whom are becoming members of the profession, others wholly unsuitable to represent it either to the client or the public. Worse than this is the repeated enunciation of a principle that need rather than qualification shall govern the selection of personnel in this field, and still worse the statement that the administration of relief is not a social job at all and can better be done by other kinds of persons. We have lost what must now seem like the splendid isolation of which we complained loudly sometime ago. We deplored the absence of publicity a short while back. We are now accorded an avalanche of front page items that are often a serious misrepresentation of fact, and an affront to our professional dignity even when true. Perhaps less tangible but more real is the loss—perhaps I should say only the ebb—of that lift of the spirit that carried us over the rough places in the earlier years of the depression. We have come to the place where we dig in our heels and set our jaws. This winter—and perhaps the one to come—have often seemed to me what Valley Forge must have meant to Washington's men. Perhaps the greatest set-back of all is the flat rejection of relief as an evil thing. For although no group in the world has less illusions about relief than social workers, being realists we can trace a causal relation between this official disapproval of something for which as yet no effective substitute has been found, and the storms of criticism that have been let loose, not this time



upon social workers, but upon relief recipients. A few years ago these people were "those unemployed through no fault of their own." Suddenly the emphasis changes and we hear much about chiselers, idlers, those who refuse work, generating fear and bitterness in the minds of present and future clients and their children, until it bids fair to destroy the fine fabric of co-operative effort which social work has introduced into relief administration, and without which it would long since have been a national scandal. These losses, although illustrated largely in the public relief field are reflected in all other fields of social work. For the private field has lost the relief appeal and we have still to develop effective interpretation of its distinctive contributions. We find private social work accused of being the source of a kind of esoteric philosophy and technique, applicable only "to abnormal people in normal times"—as if these factors of time and people were conceivably separable. (On that basis all professional social workers could have sabbatical leaves every seven years when a depression is on.) Our most serious set-back is the lack of a sufficiently positive national program to consolidate even the small gains that have been made.

Where do Association activities fit into this picture? With patient, persistent (the staff would say frantic) effort the Association has pursued our professional objectives, tracked them down when they were most elusive, and brought them into the light of day when they seemed obscure. The areas of our interest have been more sharply defined in this last year than ever before and we have been able through increased chapter and committee activity to find ourselves in relation to professional standards with an increasing basic agreement and sure-footedness. This very awareness has sharpened the lines of difference among us, just as it has deepened the lines of agreement. To me this seems healthy professional growth.

The records of the national office show greater chapter activity than ever before, in spite of the fact that people are busier month by month on their individual distressing tasks. The new device of the Delegate Conference has drawn increasing interest and wider representation with each meeting. The committees are turning out volumes of material for discussion and use. Local and state chapters are achieving recognition as the official voice of social work in their areas in relation to our subject matter.

I shall not attempt to illustrate these points because there is not a member who cannot furnish page and verse to his own satisfaction more effectively than I. It seems to me we have come to the place where the Association is an intensely personal experience, no matter what our relation to it. We shall have a report from one of the divisions today—our newest in point of time—which will further demonstrate this thesis.

We have worked actively on the principle enunciated by the Executive Secretary two years ago in relation to social legislation:

"... the national Association might adopt the following policy in relation to legislation: (1) To be alert to opportunities to function in support of legislation, the desirability of which is indicated by the experience of social workers and to get in deep when, as an association of workers, it is more free to function than are the associations representing more heterogeneous groups; (2) To provide the chapters and the membership with material bearing on national legislative proposals in which social work has an interest; (3) To stimulate the collection and presentation of professionally tested evidence bearing on national social problems; (4) To support and encourage the social worker to have and express his opinions on public questions, bearing in mind, however, the different value of evidence which we derive from professional experience and of opinions which we hold for other reasons."

More of this later.

We have prepared a draft of an Official Declaration on Professional Standards for such use as can be best made of it in clarifying our program to the public and to those who impinge upon our field. This statement is neither final nor static. It should draw vigorous comment from the membership and be revised from time to time as occasion warrants. It is simple and understandable, designed to do only what a short time ago we should not have thought necessary.

The proposed Directory is another endeavor to set forth to a questioning world who we are—not as some of our members think—where we live (because most of us don't live anywhere these days and when we do, not long in the same place).

I cannot leave this subject of Association activity without sharing with you my own feeling

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and that of the Executive Committee and indeed all of those who have had intimate contact with our staff. One member has said, "Being on the Executive Committee of the Association is a liberal education in social work." You and I, even if we are in this privileged relationship, are busy with our regular jobs. We take the Association for granted—less today than formerly perhaps—but here is a group of people whose whole time and talent is focussed on professional problems. They gather in the developments in the field from chapters, from committees, from divisions, from individual members and subject them to a process which crystallizes for us the very salt of the problem. And they have a genius for this. I know of nothing quite like this activity in any other profession and, although I suspect they enjoy their jobs as few of us do these days, I would like to record this word of congratulation to ourselves for our good fortune. Their capacity for single-minded devotion to the professional objectives of social work has made it possible for me to see a road ahead which it would be so easy to miss in the confusion of voices and signs about us.

It is not an easy road to choose. We are a group of people who for the most part entered social work and have continuously practiced it in good times and bad with that lift of the spirit—I know no better description—which seems for the moment to be on the ebb. The reason for this is not merely to be found in our weariness. I can best illustrate what I mean by a story. When I was very young I distinguished myself in the family by announcing, on the occasion of my first major tumble, that "the floor came up and hit me." I think we all feel as if the floor had come up and hit us. This occasion was to me the beginning of education both in perspective and equilibrium. Perhaps the period through which we are living will do the same for us. I have lost my illusions about floors. I have learned that they are hard, they may be rough or slippery, silent or creaky, sound or rotten. But for the life of me I could not lay one—although I confess to an occasional impulse to tear one up.

There is a definite challenge to professional distinctions in this absurd anecdote. Social work has never had any illusions about the nature of the conditions under which it is practiced but it has acquired a wealth of knowledge about the effects of those conditions, and we have developed a habit, more taken for granted in these days than earlier, of telling what we know. If we put a flimsy rug over a bad crack, that is not only not good social work, it is not social work at all, and we would be the first to disclaim it. Another illusion we have lost—if indeed we ever had it—

is that there is any simple highroad to human happiness or security. And more important than this, we have learned that there are matters of public policy (even mentioned in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights) to which social work like other groups must make its significant contribution. As Miss Richmond put it—"each contribute his characteristic difference." We shall have failed in our professional responsibility if we pursue the policy and forsake the facts. Ours is the rarest laboratory in the world. How skillful are we in the use of that laboratory for benefit of our clientele and society at large? How much do we tell of what we really know? Are we scientifically so young that we cannot bear to reiterate what seems to us a truism until it becomes an established fact—and in consequence—a motivating force. One of the most poignant recent experiences with an unemployed group was the discovery that they were suddenly demanding, not higher relief grants, or any of the normal demands, but rather a publicity man on the public agency staff to prove that the clients were not chisellers and cheats. Is the weight of our evidence so heavy upon us that we cannot bear it? Here is an immediate battle to be fought. Some will choose to fight it in the field of propaganda, some will choose to bear witness. And there will be casualties in both instances. Martyrdom is not reserved for the advocates of a program. Some of us will lose our jobs for marching in a parade, and some of us for testifying before a Senate Committee. We need both types of devotion. Let us recognize this subtle but genuine difference, however. For the one privilege we fight as a matter of civil liberty. The other we demand as a test of professional integrity.

Our capacity for loyalty to professional standards is also facing a severe test. Are we at the point where we must build tariff walls about our precious standards, make trade agreements (this is your back yard and that mine) and then defend them with our professional lives, leaving ourselves isolated and that great body of becoming social workers, thwarted and bitter? Or are we sufficiently sure of ourselves to say in effect, by such and such training and discipline we arrived here. There is no reason to suppose that you require less of either. You are where we were a few years ago—only there are more of you. Let us try to understand each other for eventually we shall be colleagues; you perhaps better trained, better disciplined than we. By virtue of catastrophic circumstances you are working in our field. We cannot protect you from your own mistakes, nor defend you against attack. Your first professional step will have been taken when you recognize that it is standards of



performance to which we must be loyal, not status alone.

What tests do we apply within the professional group itself? In the early part of this discussion I referred to attacks from within. Have we confused humility with guilt? Because we do not know enough about anything, do we relieve our anxiety by telling a breathless world that we don't know anything, and that someone else could do as well or better? This is broad-minded, generous and impressive, but professionally untrue. Little as we know and limited as are our techniques, there are things we know how to do better than anyone else. Why wait for someone else to say so? Today this is not self-criticism, but professional hari-kari. Have we the strength to discipline such colleagues by reducing them to the level they have selected for themselves? We would then all be in a desirable educational situation. Abnegation is not only not a form of self-criticism; it is not a very modern interpretative device. The same treatment must be accorded to those who misuse their knowledge and skill and to those who fall into the fascistic error of uncritical adherence to written doctrines. Perhaps

we have been so busy extending a friendly hand to the oncoming that we have neglected our professional housecleaning. It may be that the profession needs a "purge."

I have observed that it has been impossible for me to make my points without an excessive use of terms of aggression. As a pacifist I am disturbed by this—and my knowledge of psychoanalysis does not aid me. But my friends, this is a serious business and I fear a bitter battle. We have many friends but they cannot fight this battle for us. We cannot as a profession afford the position that we are too proud to fight for our professional principles. Those of us who are not in trenches had better prepare for ambulance service. Let me try another analogy. Public opinion is like metal. It is molded when it is hot. *Now* is the time to impress upon that part of public opinion which is focussed upon social work the hallmark of our trade. *Now* is the time to hammer out those designs whose beauty and utility we know, to apply them large scale as we have on a minute basis, to adapt them to the requirements of the larger model. This will be the measure of our professional growth.

## The Status of Social Case Work Today

By GRACE F. MARCUS

(Editorial Comment. *Compass* publication of this paper, given by Grace Marcus for the National Conference of Social Work program at Montreal, is due to conviction that the paper makes a long range contribution to the problem of finding basic unity as it emerges in the professional growth of social work. The professional view with which the paper assesses social case work would seem to be applicable to the assessment of any other changing aspect of social work.

One of the least understood questions about the growth and direction of the American Association of Social Workers is: what should be the nature and place of professional education as it relates to the preparation of social workers. The aim of AASW is to make it possible for the professional group to recognize in practical ways the importance of status for social work personnel. And this is realized to the degree that members make use of the Association and the status it represents in the interest of basic social work.

Miss Marcus discusses things that are inherent in AASW requirements. She does not exhaust the elements of professional education. She evaluates something that should be understood before it is added to or subtracted from. She examines certain essential processes in a way that is divorced from the partisan interests of this or that field of social work, or this or that specific social work function. It suggests the un-

hampered freedom of intelligence which Flexner includes in his characterization of a profession. Inherently for that reason one might question the narrowness of the title. Miss Marcus chooses to examine the issues with which case work confronts social work because these, she shows, are of fundamental concern to social work, the public recognition of which as a profession can grow only out of elementary unity and functional integrity within.

It is as if she had said that social work must see and credit itself with progress in the midst of trial and error; that elementary unity and functional integrity of social work may be difficult to achieve for the same reason that in medicine they would have defied achievement if developments in the public health administration field had been simultaneous with the evolution of individual medicine.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find Miss Marcus making the observation that social work has so far been forced into hasty assemblings of information; and that these assemblings are frequently borrowed from the cupboards of other disciplines and professions. Added to that difficulty she points out, there is limited opportunity to evaluate their meaning for social work. Another astute remark points out that professional changes, arising out of social workers' attention to phenomena that are naturally denied by laymen, are



never readily assessed. For this reason she addresses herself to some of the changes and "their significance in increasing the working capital of case work."

Not the least important suggestion about certain new knowledge and changes has to do with a realization that there are limitations in both clients and social workers, which realization becomes part of the net working capital of social workers.

The paper is arresting at a time when: the external features of a body of practice are distorted on the front page of news sheets; the average citizen is introduced to complexities of social work functions by the path of heavy taxation; and social workers themselves are overwhelmed by the mixture of real and unreal hazards of present relief administration. It is suggested that the barriers of social culture have supported the universal conception of the normal as different in nature and kind from the abnormal, and that for this reason perhaps some of us recently have clutched at this cultural prejudice in trying to explain all the uncontrolled problems of mass relief administration. A more ready

acceptance of psychological understanding would produce a more general realization that such understanding is not of necessity an extra charge upon social work nor one requiring elaborations. The acquisition of a fund of professional understanding is a complex thing; certain methods of applying that understanding, however, may remain simple. It is as if the paper were pointing out that understanding the patient's digestive processes does not make it harder for him to digest.

Of the validity of concepts and methods of studying people in distress, Miss Marcus says that professional practice can entertain no values except those of understanding the problems with which it deals, plus the values of learning how to make that understanding serviceable to the needs of clients.

The paper attempts to establish the hypothesis that the profession must respect the meaning and value of data and experience that have come from the practice of social work and have added to the understanding of the individual in his relation to the problems of living.)

—C. C. R.

USUALLY when we discuss the unestablished status of case work, we think of the misunderstandings, prejudice and lack of interest which color the attitudes of the general public toward its purposes and methods. These public attitudes create a major environmental problem which it would be rank folly to underestimate. There are, however, similar misconceptions, antagonisms, and indifferences in the attitudes of social workers. These attitudes, to whatever cause they are referred, constitute a more intimate danger, not only to the growth of case work, but to the development of that generic base for all social work which alone can sustain its evolution into a profession. The branches of a profession have to acknowledge common sources of contributory knowledge and must understand one another's specific methods enough to utilize appropriately the data yielded by them. A profession should moreover be concerned that its special branches integrate their functions in the common fund of knowledges, methods and data. Only in the loosest terms has social work defined a common ground—terms subject to any interpretation the individual feels moved to place upon them. The issues with which case work confronts social work are issues of fundamental concern to social workers as a group, for social work in general cannot win professional recognition or opportunity unless it first achieves an elementary unity and functional integrity within itself.

In any consideration of this anomalous status of case work, it is true that an immediate difficulty besets us in the fact that actual existent practice

obeys no fixed code nor conforms to any definition our own chosen views might tempt us to set up. There has been no orderly, universal progress from one chronological stage to another more advanced. The most progressive principles may only be giving authority to the personal insights of a past minority. The application of new ideas, earnestly subscribed to, may be strangely distorted by underlying attitudes which the socially minded of any period would have disavowed. One fund of tested experience may fall into partial eclipse while another is being created. The rudimentary trial and error of the past still travels under the name of case work, and often in a form and spirit which would have been repudiated by good practitioners then, as now. Nevertheless there is a body of tested data, approved practice and accepted theory which, whatever its origins in time or the extent of its observance, has a specific character the development of which can be traced and analyzed. If we take the pains to remember that case work as a whole is unstable, diverse, and chronologically inconsistent in its parts, it is because these attributes have played a role in confusing social workers about its nature and values.

But let us examine some of the prevalent attitudes of social workers toward case work. In one easily distinguishable category is the friendly indifference which has always taken case work for granted as a body of common sense procedures requiring a degree of craftsmanship readily obtained through an undefined training and experience. A cordial conviction about the utility of these common sense procedures may coexist



with the paternalistic assumption that the policy-making and program-making of social work have little to seek, except occasional data executively secured, from the obscure activities of the case workers who operate in the kitchen basement.

Another group of attitudes springs from a conflict about the purposes and methods of case work, honorable in itself but stubbornly persistent through all the changes which have occurred in case work theory and practice, in fact in some social workers only intensified by those changes. On one side of the conflict, we find the old distaste for the essential inquiries of case work as violations of personal privacy, and the old suspicion of the treatment of case work as an encroachment on personal autonomy; on the other side, we discover that these doubtful activities are tolerated as an unavoidable system of regulation for the protection of the community against the parasitic, the abnormal and the anti-social. Some of the social workers who entertained these mixed feelings about case work and its subjects have responded to the new situation, in which the depression brought what appeared to them a radically different clientele, by excluding case work as an administrative irrelevancy in the handling of the unemployed. Others have retreated entirely from any acknowledgment of personal factors in maladjustment into economic dogmas that caricature Marxian theory.

However, we are not done with our catalogue, for another constellation of doubts and resistances has formed about the technical developments in case work. Some of the fear aroused by this growth has attached to the danger that the past and its accretions of experience will be discarded, a reasonable fear always, but one which, in many instances, has diverted into opposition of the new that energy which was sorely needed for the task of testing it fairly and for constantly reorganizing and reintegrating the increasing body of theory and practice. The rapidity of change has impressed many social workers as evidence of the instability and fickleness of case work thinking. To them case work has become fatally subject to fads and fancies inconsistent with the possession of valid insights or sound convictions. Its practice has shifted frivolously with every psychological wind that blows and the principles of last year have met the fate of last year's hat.

There are innumerable other charges lodged against case work by social workers. Its fundamental purpose of adjusting the individual to himself, his human relationships and his environment seems trivial and reactionary to some. Case work is a sop to the underprivileged, obscures the issues of social justice, imposes on the individual the cruel burden of adapting himself to a psy-

chotic society and, in so far as it succeeds, constitutes a brake on social action. From this point of view case work is not equal to basic problems and bears no more relation to social welfare than the art of cosmetics does to health.

We might continue with our inventory indefinitely. However, our purpose is to illumine the status of case work among social workers, not to indict social workers for granting it so little or, if you will, misunderstanding it so much. Therefore it does not seem important to examine all the superficial provocations for this embarrassing collection of doubts, fears, resistances and rejections or, in the interests of academic thoroughness, to point out that many of these attitudes are shared by some of those who practise case work. The vital consideration is that such views as these are serious problems—more serious than many of us have realized—for the social workers holding them are not infrequently those who influence the conditions under which case work is done, and are often our spokesmen endeavoring to interpret and defend to the public activities the very nature of which they themselves do not accept. We do not want a stultifying approval of case work. We do not naively ask that social workers make their criticism of it "constructive." We concede a certain gain from the stimulus such attitudes as those described have furnished us. What should concern us more than any immediate question of our mental comfort or our own status is the evidence that a large number of social workers have not understood a complicated development, and have either refused to admit that they could not understand it without making a more deliberate study of it, or have not acknowledged any pressing reasons for understanding it at all. Therefore their participation in the growth of case work and in the utilization of its significant products has been half-hearted, confused, and not professionally responsible. To be just, the issue of responsibility has not been clear to them and has only recently become clear to us. From the point of view of social work it is, however, a crucial issue. Within the field of social work something new and long desired has happened, the emergence of case work from the craft stage to that of an embryonic professional art, an art for that very reason not easily comprehensible to the intelligent bystander, whether he be the interested layman or the non-caseworking social worker. The paramount question is whether social work will continue to remain external to that development because the understanding of it bristles with the difficulties characteristic of any activity penetrating beyond the familiar into the unknown. That issue is fundamentally more important than even the development which raises it, for it in-



volves a test of the willingness of social work to assume the heavy burdens of becoming professional.

The outward manifestations accompanying profound changes may obscure the inner nature and the real direction of the growth producing them. To comprehend that growth in case work, we might consider the contribution of Mary Richmond. What did she do for case work? She collected and sifted the results of years of empirical work, defined a method in relation to its problems and purposes, and formulated the rationale of its procedures. Hers was a vigorous scholarship which applied itself to the labors of examining masses of detail, which resisted tempting scholastic generalizations, and ventured solidly into related fields and other disciplines at the bidding of a problem to be understood. In its firm stress on the deductive method her work established the individualizing principle of study and treatment as basic in the theory and practice of case work.

After Mary Richmond came a psychiatric deluge. It overtook case work from without in the shape of theories about human development, explanations of human behavior and relationships, and methods for changing human feelings and conduct. It was eclectic, and subject to dilutions, expurgations and the intrusion of foreign elements which often denied or distorted its real origin in psychoanalytical research. However, once it was habituated to this crude contribution, case work entered upon its present stage of internal assimilation and change. New material was brought into use, this time material more directly and authentically related to psychoanalytic experience and knowledge. The observations of case work were noticeably sharpened and deepened by attention to data the significance of which had been established by psychoanalytic inquiries. The findings of case work were subject to the improved understanding supplied by psychoanalytic discoveries about the structure, development and functioning of the human psyche. The case work method of study and treatment underwent inner corrections inspired by psychoanalytic experience with methods of studying the mind.

If we analyze this second stage, we find that all of its activity has been characteristically limited by the absence of certain resources and traditions in social work which the recognized professions have found essential to growth. In social work no facilities exist for exploring and organizing into a fundamental educational background the fields of knowledge necessary to a sound understanding of man as an organism or of his evolution, history, customs, systems and institutions. Social work has so far been forced to content it-

self with hasty assemblings of information borrowed from the cupboards of other disciplines and professions which are for the most part indifferent to its existence. Unstimulated by the prevalent methods of general education, the zest for social work scholarship has been starved by the scantiness of curricula which often have the practical orientation of the trade school, with the result that among active social workers the only criterion to which knowledge from other fields is subjected is that of its direct applicability to the handling of a present problem.

These adverse conditions, which are natural in an insecure, immature field like social work, have determined the overt forms in which the psychoanalytical contribution has been presented. The actual data from which psychoanalytical theories are derived have been condensed and simplified to meet the needs of the intellectually impatient. Involved theories have submitted to a similar process. There has been little of that scientific and scholarly discipline which toughens and strengthens the mind to master difficult, strange, and often repugnant facts, not as they are offered in popular glosses but as they are found in authoritative texts. These mental habits have also prevented the development of active, ample channels for the communication of case work data, the analysis and comparison of method, and the working out of experimentation. We are still largely confined to the elementary device of discussing the principles governing case work as "points of view," "concepts" and "philosophy" and have given ourselves little chance to follow these principles in their clinical embodiments. The result is that whole areas of case work practice are cynically disputed as if they were "theories" unconfirmed by case work findings, and the complexities and sensitiveness of method are reduced to a "philosophy" which appears more a profession of faith than the product of an already effective experience in dealing with living beings in real situations. All of this has given encouragement to the innocent belief that the whole of a development can be conveyed in neat, comprehensive phrases divorced from context and endowed with any content the individual chooses to attach to them. I offer you at random "passivity," "self-determination," "therapy." From an advertising point of view such slogans have the advantage of novelty. They arrest passing attention. From a case work point of view the indiscriminating traffic in them denies the necessity of background and experience as an honest basis for understanding and criticism, and weakens the basic allegiance of case work to individualization.

We have stressed a few of the environmental handicaps with which this later development of



case work has been compelled to contend—the variations of unstandardized practice, the misunderstandings of the social work group, the sketchy educational background, the meagre resources for clinical study and communication during a period of change. Yet the exciting fact is that, despite all obstacles, case work has undergone a steady, self-consistent development. Beneath the external confusion there has been continuity and direction. The established wisdom of the past has been anchored to explicit knowledge. If the underlying integrity of this growth has been obscured, it is chiefly because the changes in case work thinking and experience have gone further than is popularly realized by social workers. They are more radical, more pervasive and more decisive. They cannot be assessed from listening to National Conference papers, reading an assortment of books, or following social work gossip. They are professional changes arising out of attention to phenomena denied by laymen, related to a science and art not subject to ready comprehension or judgment, and shaped by a case work experience which has to be studied to be understood.

We cannot be systematic or all-inclusive in our examination of these changes or give any time to explanations of their purely scientific meanings but we might briefly review some of them to define their significance in increasing the working capital of case work.

A primary agent of change has been the acceptance and use of the theory of the unconscious. Case work did not have to hunt for problems in which the irrational played a decisive part. They were insistently present in the daily job and thwarted the most elementary practical aims. The unconscious could not long remain abstract theory. The evidence of its existence in human motives, thoughts and behavior was clamorous. Its operation was directly perceived and convincingly felt. It became impossible for case work to exclude as unreal and immaterial irrationalities so often reducing its simple, necessary efforts to futility and defeat. The case worker's acknowledgment of the unconscious was destined to transform her whole view of reality. No intellectual vanity, no love of the bizarre but plain necessity was to be responsible for an indefatigable effort to deal more intelligently with unconscious factors distorting individual lives. The true explanation of the continuity and inner logic of case work's recent development is to be found in the sense of iron necessity which bound case workers to understand and handle, if possible, problems which they did not invent for their sport but which were inescapable and immediate.

The recognition of the unconscious involved consequences. Case workers were unavoidably

exposed to evidence in their own cases of the determining role which the repressed primitive impulses and the forgotten experience of early childhood played in forming the personality. The theory of psychic determinism, as unpalatable to man's pride in his self-knowledge and free will as Darwin's theory of his biological descent from a collateral branch of the apes, forced upon case workers a view of human nature which is essentially scientific. The individual, to be understood in even his most superficial, commonplace activities, must be seen as a psychobiological organism, the functioning of which is determined by its structure and the peculiar development compelled by the interacting stimuli of inner needs and of environmental conditions and demands.

The reverberations of a scientific orientation so alien to all the speculative systems by which man had attempted to account for his nature and his fate have been far-reaching. In the first place there was ruled out every scale of values which had habitually influenced observations, interpretations, and judgments of human behavior. Aesthetic, moral, and conventional social standards became irrelevant criteria and were instead subject to study as factors within the individual and society to be reckoned with objectively. This objectivity could be no intellectual attitude donned for special occasions. It involved a deep assimilation of the meanings of unconscious motives and thoughts, a willingness to relinquish time-honored, essential prejudices about human nature and life, and to include in one's thinking about one's self and others an awareness of impulses and strivings which have been subject to profound taboos since man had any society or culture to protect. Thus the long process of civilization by which certain wishes, thoughts and acts were isolated from consciousness was now being reversed. The natural fear, anger and disgust which such mental phenomena usually evoke in the lay observer were brought sufficiently under the case worker's control for the pathological and the anti-social to be seen in relation to psychological forces that move us all. The arbitrary barriers which supported the conception of the normal as different in nature and kind from the abnormal, fell. This meant the loss of the precious illusions and distinctions which sustained personal superiorities. It opened up the gulf of suffering in which neurotic and delinquent behavior have their roots. It revealed the secret connections between primitive impulses and that deeper conscience in man whose exercise of savage prohibitions may sacrifice his creative capacities and cripple his social development.

The theory of psychic determinism, as the basis for it was confirmed in case work observations,



entailed other, no less fundamental discoveries for case workers. One was the necessity for realizing the limitations of the individual's conscious responsibility for his own motives and acts. The simple corollary to this was a realization of the limitations in the case worker's power to influence those wishes and acts, either by intellectual persuasion, environmental "manipulation," or social restraints. The structure of the human psyche could not be improved by external forces, whether of society, environment, or the case worker's will nor could its functioning be wrested from the dominance of its own natural principles by the ingenuity of case work skills. The case worker's surrender of a vague omnipotence was a surrender to a deeper realism, not to a specialized interest, to laziness or cowardice. To a group who have so frequently been concerned to reform and rescue, it came hard to admit that the nature of man's mind, like that of his body, is determined, and that the course of its long evolution cannot be hastened or redirected to some magical goal. How difficult it is for us to accept this harsh truth is revealed by our distortion of it into the facile concept of "self-determination," whereby we can relapse once more into comforting dependence on free will, and by talking of self-determination as a "right," flatter ourselves that a fact which is often intolerably painful to the individual and to society is still within our power to concede or refuse as a social benefit.

The case worker's psychoanalytic understanding of the psyche confronted him with other restrictions on man's capacity to change himself or others through the exercise of his distinctive rational faculties. Daily experience showed that the emotional causation of the individual's thoughts and behavior was more complicated than conscious analysis had led us to suppose. Multiple and interlocking unconscious factors were found to operate in the production of a single external symptom. Nor was this all. The presence in the unconscious of opposed impulses, especially those of love and hate for the same object, made it incumbent on case work to recognize mental conflict as one of the active, unavoidable elements in life. Simple explanations of human motives ceased to coincide with the case worker's direct perception of psychological fact. The ambivalence so often controlling human attitudes and reactions was too palpable for case work any longer to assume that any general solution it might offer for a problem would satisfy the contradictory needs of irrational instincts or that manipulation of a single factor would necessarily improve or even affect a malfunctioning.

To remove human behavior from the realm of the accidental and the speculative to that of phe-

nomena to be observed and studied like any other is to submit to one of the most radical disciplines science has yet visited on the refractory spirit of man. Case work has been indirectly sensible of the severity of that discipline in a series of limitations set upon its capacities and purposes. It cannot successfully force change upon human nature. It cannot choose the personal or the social ends the individual will serve. Its ability to alter the immediate environment is restricted by the fact that that environment is always to some extent the product of individuals whose own irrational and conflicting needs help to determine its conditions and influence, and to invalidate what might seem theoretically to be essential changes in its laws, institutions and systems. These limitations have always existed. The clearer appreciation of them in case work marks its professional beginning. The awareness of limitations is essential to distinguishing between real and illusory objectives, between appropriate and misdirected method, between related effects and irrelevant phenomena. Acknowledged limitations establish a working basis for increasing knowledge of the nature of our problems; of what the specific sources of those problems are; of what factors have played into their development; of which of these factors are subject to influence; of those principles of intrinsic functioning which any responsible attempts at influence must take into account.

The recognition of the unconscious as an often decisive agency in human affairs produced in case work practice the temporary disintegrations and dislocations which are the characteristic, uncomfortable accompaniments of growth. The very fact that the development was not superimposed but sprang from internal needs for understanding deprived it of the tidy, systematic surface so reassuring to the philosophical, scholastic temper which still governs so much of social work thought and action. Mary Richmond had established the case work method as one of particularization but the data at her command did not often penetrate into the stubbornly closed circuit of the total personality because case work had not yet found its cues to the unconscious. It was inevitable that case work, once it began to apprehend the role of the irrational, should seem at times to discount the values of her rational procedures, that it should appear to ignore the external realities on which its efforts had formerly concentrated, and that it should be marked by reactions against the past in its struggle to free itself from preconceptions and blinding habit. Had social work as a whole been more accustomed to the processes of change familiar in the experience of other professions, such superficial



phenomena might not have provoked such general misunderstanding of fundamental trends. These trends involved no withdrawal from practical reality into the evasive refinements attributed to so-called "therapy." Instead they created new resources for dealing with phases of practical reality which had baffled and thwarted social work.

One of the intricate problems which was partly clarified by the new psychoanalytical orientation was that of relief-giving. Financial behavior was subjected to the same scrutiny as other behavior and was found to be frequently dominated by irrational motives not peculiar to the dependent, the abnormal and the antisocial, and equally active in the dispensers and in the receivers of funds. For the case worker, money could be stripped of the black, as well as the white magic with which the unconscious invests it, and so reduced to an objective quantity. Seen in this light, relief was neither a panacea nor a curse but simply a limited material substitute for wage income, whereby essential needs might be met to the degree, in the way, and for the period the reality of the individual situation demanded. Relief was not established as socially good and socially safe in and of itself. Instead the emotional, physical and social ills mistakenly imputed to its influence might be traced to their specific sources in the personality and life problems of the individual and in the larger forces operating in industry and society. In short, this differential diagnosis stripped relief of responsibility for creating problems or serving purposes foreign to its nature.

In its application to the problems of relief-giving the practical contributions of the new development are noteworthy. It is a popular fallacy, from which social workers have not proved to be exempt, that dependence arising from a problem beyond the individual's control does not affect the individual in ways familiar to the long case work experience of dependence, and that the victims of a mass problem do not require, by virtue of a mysterious immunity to misfortune conferred by their former working status, to be visited with the doubtful benefits of the case work service of relief. Wherever social work triumphed over these prejudices in itself and in the community, the new case work proved its capacity to adapt itself to new conditions and new forms. Its psychological understanding enabled it to reduce the red-tape which is so often a cruel defence against inner incompetence, to dissolve many of the barriers which the applicant's fear, resentment and confusion raise against prompt and efficient investigation, and to adapt its relief-giving, within the restrictions imposed by laws

and regulations, to the needs of the individual situation.

Part and parcel of the persisting incomprehension which colors the attitudes of many social workers towards case work, is the fixed idea that psychological understanding is of necessity an extra charge upon case work and must be incorporated in pathological excrescences and exquisite elaborations. This rococo concept so possesses some social workers that when they are confronted with the simple expression psychologically oriented case work often takes, they are unwilling to see that it has a psychological significance. The failure to identify psychoanalytical applications when they find practical forms strengthens the disposition to believe that "therapy" must be their single interest and their only excuse for being.

To the credit of a psychological development is the whole trend toward a selective process of study and treatment that has unburdened case work of the inclusive aims which sometimes billeted the case worker on the client like an invading army. Psychoanalytical insights have helped case work to utilize properly its direct experience with clients without seeking routine, quantitative reinforcements for weak interviewing of them by equally weak interviewing of all their relatives. A more discriminating understanding has saved futile, disrupting excursions into problems which when the client wanted to solve unaided or which he did not want to solve at all. More discerning skills have facilitated practical arrangements and environmental adjustments by leaving the client free to make his own decisions instead of "leading" him into unexpected oppositions to a prescribed course.

It has been an unconscious snobbery dictated by irrelevant values which has tried to confine case work to fixed forms and exclusive methods and has given more prestige to some of its purposes than to others, as if in medicine the physician elevated one vital organ to a dignity he denied another. Professional practice can entertain no values except those of understanding the problems with which it deals and learning how to make that understanding serviceable to the functional needs of its clients. The place of psychoanalytical insight in case work is analogous to the place of physiology in medical science—basic to any responsible understanding of the functioning of the individual as a psychobiological organism, intrinsic in all diagnosis and treatment, but not necessarily explicit in the spoken word or the written record. The processes of growth in case work and in each case worker involve transitions from the first assumption of new knowledge as an awkward baggage to a later assimilation of it



into the blood stream of everyday thinking and feeling. Case work can no more afford to reject that understanding than medicine could afford to allow its students to surrender to lay dread of the mysteries of the body, to disgust for its secretions and excretions, and to scruples about investigating its functions. The study and treatment of the deeper emotional difficulties besieging individuals in their relationships to themselves and to one another is vital to case work. The sharply limited efforts which have been dedicated to those special objectives have illuminated problems which seemed deceptively simple and have increasingly equipped case work to accommodate its practical procedures to the presence of underlying problems it could more often identify without laborious, disturbing explorations. In a true professional perspective the case work service of relief giving draws on all the knowledge and all the skills available to case work. It is the essence of individualization that its forms, methods and purposes be adapted to the specific problem in the specific circumstances. The recent developments in case work follow the road which Mary Richmond charted.

The boundaries of case work are narrow. Its immediate practice has to face the ineluctable fact that individual lives have to come to terms with reality however barbarous and unjust those terms may be. Case work does not and cannot

impose that necessity for enduring existence. The necessity survives throughout all the developments and disintegrations of economic orders and cultural institutions. Within the restrictions of its functions case work has its unique and indispensable contribution to make to social insight, improvement and change. So far as social work is concerned, its utilization of case work data and case work experience has too frequently respected neither their meaning nor their value. No branch of social work and no specialized activity within social work is released from the common obligation to understand the individual in his relation to the problems of living. Administration, professional education, group work, research, legislation, program-planning and policy-making may evolve their impressive techniques and yet deal in specious generalizations and unsound empiricisms unless they too accept the discipline of the complicated, many-sided facts revealed in the case work laboratory. There is a price to be paid for professional capacity and power that is not limited to the membership dues of the American Association of Social Workers. That price is the painful surrender of lay prejudices, lay individualisms, and the lay privilege of denying the experience of sciences and professions which pierce the protective walls which have kept man from understanding himself, his fellows, and the world in which it is his destiny to live.

## Professional Protection for the Social Worker

By RACHEL CHILDREY

THE past five years of depression have formed an epoch in social work. It is my purpose to show how the professional standards which took shape in the decade just preceding 1930, have proved to be a real protection to social work in the five years succeeding 1930; and how, on the foundation thus established, the professional Association can implement this protection for social workers. For it needs to be made clear at once, that professional standards are in themselves protective. Social work is one of the few occupations in which there has been continued demand, rather than unemployment. And professionally qualified social workers have been recognized as invaluable in setting up and supervising the new programs. This could never have occurred unless a good deal of emphasis had been placed upon standards of professional equipment. Membership requirements for the AASW written into job specifications all over the country are the most convincing evidence of the recognition of the professional standards the Association's best efforts have sought to establish and maintain.

But let us turn to examine briefly the period between the war and the depression. After the war, but built on fifty years of experience and thoughtful effort, there emerged the idea of the professional character of social work. Social workers and their supporters came to see the need and the value of specific education and training for the performance of work that demanded knowledge and skill in addition to the much lauded "common sense" and kindly heart. Schools of social work grew up to give the knowledge of society and knowledge of the individual, and develop skill in meeting the problems of both society and the individual which it was the purpose of social work to help solve.

During the same period the professional organization of the AASW developed, "blanketing in" practicing social workers at first, then defining more and more clearly in terms of professional education who should be a "social worker."

During this period, too, consideration was given to the conditions under which these professional persons were working. The efforts to deal directly



with salaries, conditions of work, and grievances were sporadic and secondary to the primary consideration of defining standards of social work and its personnel. That was because in those days, even social workers believed that if you worked hard, did your work well, you would be secure in your job—or at least in some job. The unemployment of 1921, while causing deep distress, was seen as an aftermath of the war and soon was absorbed.

It is well to recognize that this was but a reflection of the attitude of most persons of comparable social and educational position. Young people who entered social work in the twenties had been taught they were the hope of a war-weary world. It was to be their courage, their idealism, their knowledge and skill which would save the world. It was with a sense of the importance of high quality in performance, of giving their best, and thus succeeding, that that generation undertook the performance of difficult tasks in social work. Idealistic as this may sound to us today, it is nevertheless worth remembering that for the thoughtful and the able person this emphasis set the criteria of success—we did not really bother about security then—upon intelligence and skill, upon high quality in performance, and the discharge of professional responsibility. It was in this period that the AASW built its foundation of a profession of social work on the idea of high standards in quality of performance based on sound educational preparation.

Just when the AASW was consolidating the gains of those years by higher membership requirements, the depression descended, overwhelming social workers along with the rest of the nation.

I know that the Association has been criticized for choosing to maintain this high standard in the face of large numbers professionally unprepared who have been enlisted to practice social work and for whom there are not adequate educational facilities. I believe this decision was a most valuable one for no other step could have protected so well the professionally trained social worker and the standard of high quality of performance which such social workers sought to maintain.

I think this will be evident as we examine the effect of the depression upon social work and social workers.

The first effect was tremendous overwork in the face of a rapidly increasing need. The profession met this in two ways. Nationally, the profession through the AASW worked persistently and effectively to secure federal recognition of governmental responsibility for unemployment relief. Locally and individually social workers examined their work in the light of pressing needs,

took steps to protect the quality that was essential to professional performance, even as they shouldered a vast quantitative burden of relief work. And when this relief work was expanded under federal financing and supervision to gigantic proportions in an effort to meet an even more gigantic need, social workers put their best efforts into seeing that this should be done in the light of professional standards of disinterested, humane service to the community.

At the same time the profession and its standards of performance were seriously threatened by inadequate financing for social work under both public and private auspices and by large numbers of persons trained in other fields, or without any specialized training, who were employed to do work that was essentially social work.

Never before was social work and its separate acts and policies so much before the eye of the public, so much discussed, approved, and criticized. By their efforts to provide the best that the profession had to offer, and thus taking responsibility in the relief program, professional social workers put themselves in jeopardy for the unprofessional performance of unqualified workers. For the unthinking part of the public makes little distinction between the trained and untrained, blaming each perhaps for the defects of the other. Social work is being judged by its weakest link—a tremendous job, undertaken in haste, for the magnitude of which it was not prepared—and not by its best performance in the area in which experience had been consolidated. But that thoughtful and responsible persons do recognize and value the professional services of trained social workers and distinguish them from poor and unprofessional performance is just as true. In spite of all the attacks of recent months, even those under pressure of political expediency, the use of professionally educated workers continues and the demand for them grows. Is not a constant reiteration of the value of standards, and every other effort the Association can put forth to maintain them, the only sound basis of protection for the profession and its members? We need to believe in professional standards ourselves and see that the public has before it a basis of judgment in sound professional criteria.

What of the attitudes which have arisen during this period? Young people have come into social work by thousands when previously they came by hundreds. They have come in the face of difficulty and insecurity in getting their education, with uncertainty as to what they had to offer, and even greater uncertainty as to what society would allow them to contribute to it. No longer is individual achievement the goal; it has become social security. Before the depression,



if a young man lost a social work job, he had no great fears—other fields were open and perhaps more inviting. Today social work offers the greatest chance of a job, and even without personal inclination or interest, many have sought it as a place to earn a living. But if a person loses his job in social work today, where is he? There may be other jobs, but scarcely any other fields are as open. Small wonder, then, that security has become so important and professional qualifications seem secondary.

This fundamental security social workers are not alone in seeking. It is a common goal for everyone in a world never so insecure. It is this security based on a human being's need for a means of livelihood that is the aim of most so-called protective measures, including organization of employees for collective bargaining as to salaries, conditions of work, etc., and protest of dismissal or other alleged unfair treatment by the employing agency.

There can be no doubt that the very association for common personal aims gives a sense of security. Human beings respond to the feeling of identity of interest with others. Not one of us but has at some time thrilled to the call of "The Three Musketeers" (One for all and all for one). I, personally, and I think I am right in saying that the Association, has no quarrel with that concept, so far as it goes. For some workers that is the only protection available because they are not professionally qualified or not professionally competent.

I believe the trouble with it is that it is not fundamental or far-reaching enough for a professional association. Neither is it really protective enough. It is practically never, for example, that a person once fired gets reinstated. One has to be realistic about that. But if you protest his dismissal just because he had a job, needed it, and now has none, you establish nothing save that he is human. And the man who takes his place has the same claim. If, however, you protest his dismissal because he is professionally competent and such a dismissal jeopardizes the professional performance of the agency, you still may not secure reinstatement but you have embodied the idea of a professional standard. You have established a basis of judgment for the public as well as for the agency. As this idea—that of professional competence as the sole criteria for employment and tenure—is made the clear-cut issue, all those who qualify under it are immediately provided a more fundamental protection. No longer are they competitors with every other person who might need a job. The competition is narrowed considerably to those who are professionally qualified, and they are protected

against even this competition unless they, themselves, have failed.

It seems clear that the first kind of protest offers protection to the persons who may not be competent or qualified. The Association's idea of protection and the principle on which it works, however, provides ultimately greater protection for those who are competent. For no matter how new a worker may be, as he performs his social work intelligently and thoughtfully, as he seeks knowledge and acquires skill, he becomes professionally competent. It would be too bad for him then to have to depend only on his fundamental need of a job as a basis for protection. How much more secure if he may find protection in the professional standards which the Association bends its efforts to maintain. Ultimately there is no protection or security save as the members of the whole community will provide it. But employing social agencies would be bold indeed to defy a principle of professional qualification as the criteria for employment, when such an issue is made clear-cut and public. It would amount to saying to the community, "we ask your support because we serve you, but we won't give you any better service than we can help."

In what I have been saying there has been reference to professional standards and to protest at their infringement. I should like to talk a little more specifically about these two subjects. The general subject of professional standards has already been discussed. I wish to reiterate, however, that a standard of professional education, as a basis for professional status is a simple, easily understood, and in the long run, an effective way of securing professional competence and offering protection to the social worker. In making clear such a standard and embodying it on every occasion, lies the surest professional protection.

Another means of protection lies in setting standards of personnel practices. For instance, the Association believes strongly that social workers and their employes should come to a genuine "meeting of minds," i.e., they should make a contract of employment in the light of full knowledge of the conditions of employment. Social work has been lax about this. We have assumed the integrity and good will of both parties at the time of employment. But if later the social worker does something which the agency does not quite approve, traditions of the agency or the community, moral standards irrelevant to the job at hand, or many another extraneous matter is raised as a reason for criticism or dismissal. If traditions, or special moralistic considerations are of importance to the agency, the employee should understand the importance of them as related to his work; not be faced with punishment after he



has infringed them. We recognize that social work includes agencies having many special aims. What is recognized as reasonable or desirable by one agency may be inexcusable in another. For instance, in a non-sectarian family society a case worker as part of her job would send a client who asked such help to a birth control clinic; in a Catholic family society that action would at least be subject to censure. This is an extreme illustration to make clear my point. The Association recognized that there may be differences in functions and policies, differences in the communities served, and their standards. It is common tradition that in the small community a social worker's private life is much more subject to review in the light of community prejudice than in a large city. While we recognize these differences, and recognize also that no one would wish a worker to be employed only after promising to uphold the ten commandments and Emily Post, it is incumbent upon the agency to define its policies, and to indicate any special sore toes, treading upon which would cause acute discomfort for worker and agency alike.

But in addition to these general considerations, every worker should know, and all too often he does not know, not only his own salary at time of employment, but how much he may hope to earn in that job, and what other possibilities there may be in other jobs in the agency. He should know the basis on which increases are made. He should know on what basis vacation is computed, and whether if he leaves at the end of a year—whether the first or the fifth—he is entitled to his vacation. He should know the amount of sick leave with pay, whether any extension would be possible in case of necessity. He should know whether he is protected by workmen's compensation insurance. He should, of course, know the hours of work, and frankly be told the agency's policy as to overtime work. With every other circumstance favorable, a worker might wish to refuse a job that involved such a heavy load that overtime was consistently required. He has a right to know ahead of time what his job will involve, to whom criticisms, complaints, or suggestions may legitimately be made with expectation of genuine consideration, and to whom appeal may be made in case of disagreement. It is more likely, in the light of our former practice, that he will ask what opportunities there are for further professional training both on the job and through leaves of absence. You may say that this specific stating of conditions is formal and seems awkward in many employment situations. Possibly it does. But it is not half so painful to employer and employee to think out clearly ahead of time what it is they are agreeing to, as it is

to try to be fair after a dispute when feelings are high and decisions are necessarily colored by them.

It is valuable to consider, however, what limitations are involved in such a procedure. A careful and specific contract with each worker might prove so binding that the agency would be unable to adjust its program to meet changing conditions. This would indicate the need of a supplementary step. If policies must be changed, the agency has the right to change them—but not without due notice, so the worker, in fact, has opportunity to agree to the changed conditions. For instance, an agency might agree to give a month's vacation at the end of the year's work. The second year they find only three weeks is possible. It is essential that the workers be told before the year begins rather than after they have served the year in expectation of the month's vacation. This may seem elementary and I would not labor the point were it not that inquiries to the national office indicate how little social workers have provided ahead of time for clear understanding as to their rights as well as their duties.

I have stressed knowing what the conditions are. But I should like to make a few comments about what they should be. It is not my intention at this time to state a specific standard but rather to discuss some of the principles involved in setting such a standard. I hope the Division of Employment Practices will be able to draft a specific set of standards in the field as a goal toward which agencies may work. But at this point, it is principles rather than specific items on which we have reached agreement. It is easy to say that employment practices should be good. But how do you judge whether a given practice or series of practices are good? The extremes of very good and very bad may also be easy to identify. But what is the principle involved? Again it seems to me it is a professional principle growing out of the Association's concern for high quality of professional performance. The issue at stake is whether or not the policy in question insures such professional practice. Does it attract to the job persons of sound educational background, ability, leadership, and social philosophy? Does it provide for stimulation of further professional growth? Does it secure the maximum release of individual skills for professional service rather than allow energies to be dissipated in dissatisfaction and a sense of injustice?

To be more specific, the salary scale should be based on the amount and kind of preparation and experience required for each position, taking into account the current costs of maintaining a satisfactory scale of living and of securing additional professional education. That the salaries



should be too high, I consider a contingency too remote to contemplate at present. That they should be so low that only those who can get nothing else, or who have a flair for personal self-sacrifice would take or keep the job, is a grave danger against which social agencies must guard if they are to survive as professional organizations of value to the community.

Again, so elementary a matter as good physical conditions of work is frequently ignored by private as well as public agencies. The makeshift and often dangerous offices of the employment relief agencies all over the country are notorious. But the office of many a private case-working agency is so crowded that there is not enough space for an interview in private or thoughtful work unaccompanied by noise and bustle of others. Many a settlement house worker is struggling to crowd increasing activities into cramped quarters with little provision for the health or safety of the workers or their clients.

Vacations should be long enough to provide time for recuperation from work. This, of course, will mean that the work of the succeeding months will be done with more zest. But vacation computed on such a basis, i.e., preparation for the year's work, deprives the worker leaving the agency of a rightful part of her compensation for her work. For that is what vacation is in essence; it is compensation in leisure just as the salary is compensation in cash.

Workers should be provided with some security in the face of sickness. Perhaps the agency could carry health insurance. At least there should be a minimum period of sick leave, equal to the summer vacation with the possibility of some extension for employees of longer standing, or in case of serious illness.

What of hours of work and amount of work? Here we run into a confused issue. If we are engaged in professional practice, we assume the responsibility for the performance of our own job. We spend the time that is necessary to carry it through. This is, of course, good theory. But in practice, it is much abused. It stretches to excuse enormous case loads, night work, overtime, which all too often is habitual. Now, nothing save poor personnel itself is more prejudicial to the quality of a social work job than overloading the staff; and so nothing in employment practices could be less excusable. The executive who overworks may do it because he wishes to. But when his overwork is held as an example to the staff, when they are made to feel guilty for keeping reasonable hours and limiting the extent of their activity even in the interest of improving the quality, a bad situation is created sure to breed discontent, and a sense

of frustration. Where the staff is consistently working overtime, there should be a re-definition of the content of the job in relation to the hours of work. For amount of work is not the criteria of a good professional performance; it is the quality of the work which is primarily important. Overwork and long hours decrease not only efficiency and professional skill, but individual initiative to further professional development.

Perhaps one of the most important factors in developing a professional quality of work is opportunity for professional study or for committee activity. Going stale on a job for lack of the stimulus and new insight gained from stepping off and seeing in perspective what you are doing is inevitable when such opportunities are lacking. An agency which neglects to provide them has neglected a fundamental safeguard of the quality of its service.

I have talked at such length about these particular practices because I wished to point out how intimately related is each of them to the kind of professional service the agency can give. The agency which provides the best conditions for professional work—adequate supervision, opportunity for study, adequate pay in cash and in leisure, not more work than can be well done—will attract the most able and desirable recruits and secure from them the most intelligent and effective service.

This same principle of the importance to the agency's program of the kind of social workers they secure and the conditions they provide for their work applies especially in times of restricted funds. Then it is essential that it be recognized that professional personnel is the *sine qua non* of professional service. It becomes clear, too, how really protective the American Association of Social Workers' program can be in its insistence on standards of personnel and of practice. In stating its criteria of an approved agency for definition of the membership requirements, the importance of these two standards is stressed.

But there is another way that the AASW has chosen to help make such standards effective. For some years, the AASW has had a "Procedure in Case of Controversy," drawn up to provide machinery for the examination of grievances. But it was formal and cumbersome, and restricted in its application to members of the Association. At the recommendation of the Division of Employment Practices, the Executive Committee voted to abandon that procedure and charged the Division and chapters with the responsibility for considering complaints. The Division has drafted a suggested procedure. I should like to discuss in detail this method, so that some of the thinking behind it may be clear.



In the Chicago Chapter's Committee on Personnel Practices, a study of so-called grievance procedures of various professions brought out two essentials of such procedure: 1. That the profession has an obligation to serve the public and must be responsible for disciplining members for mal-practice; 2. That, where a profession is largely composed of employed persons this function is usually performed by the employer but that a secondary function then becomes primary, namely that the employee must be protected in the performance of his professional work from discharge or other kinds of administrative action for other reasons than professional incompetence. Thus, the American Association of University Professors will not act on behalf of a dismissed professor unless it seems likely that academic freedom has been infringed. Then their whole procedure is aimed at securing facts that are relevant to show whether or not academic freedom is the issue involved. If it is, steps are taken to ask for re-instatement. This may not be achieved but a real restriction is placed upon the arbitrary treatment of professors by the university authorities through the fear of the unfavorable publicity attendant upon the AAUP's findings. And it makes it possible for the injured professor to secure another job.

Such a device seemed to us one that would be invaluable to AASW in protecting the professional character of social work.

Based on a sound principle, an informal procedure can be of value. In the light of two basic points, that the relationship between employer and employee is contractual in quality and that the only sound basis for employment is professional competence, any situation can be examined fruitfully. The executive committee of the chapter can ask the employment practices committee or some other specially designated committee to receive complaints or requests for help in difficult situations. These may include a dismissal, or some administrative act like demotion that seems unjust, or general employment practices which seem restrictive or inadequate to protect the worker's performance. It would be the duty of this committee first to get enough facts to establish that it was one in which the principle of professional competence and performance was involved, and thus that the AASW was justified in taking jurisdiction. Because the Association is concerned about all of social work, such requests or complaints would be entertained from any social worker whether member or not, from any social agency or from any interested person if it involved a member.

Of course, facts are difficult to determine in situations involving personal feelings. But it is

the obligation of the committee to seek the facts as objectively and impartially as possible. This may involve real ingenuity and diplomacy. But upon the skill with which the facts are ascertained depends in large part the value of the committee's help. If, having had interviews with the complainant, the one against whom the complaint is made, and other persons whom they may wish to see, and having examined written statements of agency policy, contracts, personnel records, or other pertinent documents, the committee seems to have all of the facts as far as possible, it should then proceed to evaluate them in the light of the general principle of the AASW.

In cases of dismissal, or other administrative action, the question at issue is, first, has a contractual agreement been violated, and, second, is the action based on some other consideration than professional competence?

In cases of general employment practices which are inadequate the question is, does the evidence indicate that these practices do jeopardize professional performance?

With facts examined in the light of these simple principles, considerable clarity may be achieved even in difficult situations. For by limiting the Association's activity to maintaining the fundamental principle which is its purpose, namely protection of the professional character of social work, it may make its efforts effective.

When the committee examining into one of these difficult situations, having decided to take jurisdiction, has determined upon its findings of fact and interpretation, they should report them to the executive committee of the chapter and the national office. The executive committee has the responsibility for determining, with the approval of the chapter, what action should be taken. The national office needs the specific information about particular situations in order to obtain experience with which to help other chapter committees perform in difficult circumstances. We believe that experience in this field will serve to modify the procedure and will point out ways of more effective functioning for chapters and committees.

The committee which determines the facts may recommend what seems the appropriate position for the chapter to take. The chapter may request re-instatement, pointing out that the idea of professional competence as a basis for employment has been attacked. In addition it might make public the findings and organize public opinion in support of the idea. In the case of general policies that were inadequate the committee may point out the inadequacies in the light of the principle involved. We need have no fear of taking action if it is based on facts and sound



principles. That very process helps to objectify it and lighten the burden of personal feelings involved.

Of course, it will be seen at once that some cases cannot be handled by a local committee, even though the AASW should take jurisdiction. The national Division stands ready to help arrange for a satisfactory committee. The Division also is prepared to review the findings and action of the local committee or chapter if either party to the case requests it.

The Division has purposely refrained from calling this specifically a protective procedure because it believes, as I have tried to indicate, that the whole policy of the AASW, and especially its efforts to set principles and standards of employment practices, is a basic protection to which such an investigation of complaints can be but an adjunct.

There is one further element which the AASW is seeking to build into its program that will provide bulwarks for its standards. I have emphasized the value of facts and their interpretation in the light of basic principles in an individual case. Because the AASW believes that facts are just as important in the whole field of personnel in social work, the Division is drafting plans for beginning research that will provide such basic facts. Plans for this work have not advanced far enough for me to give in detail what the first subjects of study will be. But it seems important that the research be devoted to facts that will tell who social workers are, what they are doing, and

how they are paid for this service. With such information as a basis, our interpretation of ourselves as a profession can be made with the much greater authority of "one who knows whereof he speaks." The protective value of such material is at once evident.

I have pointed out the development of the professional standards of the AASW and how, though growing out of a positive ideal of service, they have proved a valuable protection in a time when protection and security seem paramount. Then I have suggested some specific ways in which these same concepts of professional service may be implemented for the further protection of the worker, through better standards of practice, examination of difficult situations and restrictive policies, and research into the basic facts concerning personnel in social work.

For the purpose of social work is to serve clients and the community. The professional Association's primary aim is to protect clients and community by professional standards as to the kind of persons who practice social work. In the last analysis the kind of service an agency gives is directly dependent upon the kind of persons it employs. We cannot expect to have really good social work or administration of social programs, public or private, until high standards of personnel and of personnel practice safeguard the professional performance. When such standards are recognized and operating they provide a kind of social work that is intelligent, humane and truly social.

## DUES INCREASE VOTED BY DELEGATE MEETING

**F**IRST by a test vote which showed more than a two-thirds majority for the dues proposal as it had been submitted by the Executive Committee, then by rejecting an amendment to exempt junior members from the increase, then by a unanimous vote to accept the test vote as the action of the Delegate Meeting, the proposal to amend the dues section of the Association's By-Laws was passed June 12, 1935, at Montreal. As a result of this action the article in the By-Laws governing dues now reads as follows:

*Article VII, Section 1.* The annual dues shall be \$7.50 for members and junior members; \$10 to \$24 for contributing members and \$25 and over for sustaining members; these dues to entitle each member living and/or working in a recognized chapter area to membership in such chapter for which the national office shall pay \$1.50 to the chapter treasurer; provided that if a recognized chapter or state organization certifies to the national Executive Committee that its membership has voted to increase or decrease the chapter and/or

state organization dues from the \$1.50 figure, the annual dues within that chapter or state jurisdiction shall be the amount so certified in addition to the \$6.00 national dues, and the national office shall pay to the chapter or state treasurer such amounts so collected; provided also that the national budget shall provide for special projects or services in behalf of members living and working in non-chapter areas. These dues shall be in effect on and after July 1, 1935.

The first vote at the Delegate Meeting was taken in a Committee of the Whole to gauge the sentiment of the delegates after there had been a full hearing of arguments for the change and against it. On the motion that the Committee of the Whole recommend to the Delegate Meeting the passage of the provision, the vote stood 83 for and 39 against.

There were 122 votes cast, which meant that all but 16 votes of the total delegate strength of the Association were counted on this issue. This was by far the most representative meeting which



had ever been held by the Association. At the Delegate Conference in Washington last February, 89 votes were cast on the dues proposal and prior to the time when Delegate Conferences were established, no machinery existed for giving similar registration of chapter sentiment on any of the Association's policies.

Opposition to the motion was expressed on two general grounds: First, opposition to increasing the amount which members would be asked to pay for the support of the organization; second, preference for a method of increase which would not apply to all members alike. This found expression in two ways. The Chicago Chapter suggested a system of graduated dues by which each member would pay according to the amount of professional income, the dues to be graduated from \$6.00 to \$15.00. Another substitute plan was that suggested by Tom Wintersteen of the Columbus Chapter in the form of an amendment to exempt junior members from the full amount of the increase in dues.

After a number of speeches for the amendment by Leroy Ramsdell, Treasurer of the Association, who made the proposal, Ewan Clague of Philadelphia, Wilber Newstetter of Cleveland, William Beehler of West Virginia, Martha Chickering of Northern California, Rachel Childrey of Philadelphia, Elizabeth McGee of Cleveland, Chester Brown of Dayton, and others; opposition expressed by Benjamin Glassberg of Milwaukee, Simon Doniger of New Jersey, Robert Dexter of Boston, Gertrude Vaile of Minneapolis; and arguments for a different method of increasing dues from Louis Evans, Wayne McMillan and Jacob Kepecs of Chicago, Mr. Wintersteen presented his amendment which provided that junior members pay \$5.00 and that the chapters would receive a \$1.00 reimbursement from the national for each junior membership. After considerable debate on this amendment it was decided, at the suggestion of Frank Bruno of St. Louis, to resolve the meeting into a Committee of the Whole and take a test vote to determine the sentiment of the delegates.

When this vote was found to give more than a two to one majority for the proposal as submitted by the Executive Committee, the Committee of the Whole adjourned. Sitting again as a Delegate Conference, a vote was taken on Mr. Wintersteen's amendment. This was rejected by a vote of 57 to 55. The Delegate Conference then passed, without dissent, the following motion by John Sanderson of Rochester and the dues proposal was passed in the original form:

*Moved*, That the Delegate Conference adopt the vote of the Committee of the Whole as the action of the

delegate body on the proposition to increase the dues, without a second roll call.

Joseph Moss of Chicago who represented a minority in the chapter and had voted for the proposal, made the following motion:

*Moved*, That it is the sense of this Delegate Meeting that a moral obligation rests on members to pay dues in accordance with the following classification of professional income: salaries of less than \$2,000, \$7.50; salaries of \$2,000 and less than \$3,000, \$10.00; \$3,000 and over, \$15.00; and that the Executive Committee be instructed to convey this to the membership.

This motion was voted down.

Miss Marcus of New York City then proposed that Mr. Moss' motion be restated in terms of a privilege instead of a moral obligation and this motion was passed without debate and without dissent.

The vote by chapters taken in the Committee of the Whole was as follows:

Chapter	For	Against	Not voting
Alabama State .....	1	—	—
Arizona State .....	1	—	—
Arkansas State .....	1	—	—
Los Angeles .....	4	—	—
Northern California .....	3	—	—
San Diego .....	—	—	1
Colorado Springs .....	—	—	1
Denver .....	1	—	—
Connecticut .....	2	—	1
Delaware State .....	1	—	—
Washington, D. C. ....	3	—	—
Florida State .....	1	—	—
Atlanta .....	1	—	—
Hawaii .....	—	—	1
Chicago .....	1	7	—
Illinois State .....	—	1	1
Indianapolis .....	1	—	—
Iowa State .....	1	—	—
Wichita .....	—	1	—
Louisville .....	—	1	—
New Orleans .....	1	—	—
Baltimore .....	2	—	—
Boston .....	1	2	—
Southeastern Mass. ....	—	1	—
Western Mass. ....	—	1	—
Worcester .....	1	—	—
Detroit .....	3	—	—
Grand Rapids .....	—	1	—
Kalamazoo County .....	1	—	—
Arrowhead .....	—	1	—
Twin City .....	—	3	—
Kansas City .....	1	—	—
St. Louis .....	—	2	1
Nebraska State .....	—	—	1
New Jersey State .....	—	3	—
Buffalo .....	2	—	—
Fort Orange .....	—	—	1
New York City .....	13	—	—
Rochester .....	2	—	—
Syracuse .....	1	—	—



Chapter	For	Against	Not voting
North Carolina State.....	—	1	—
Akron .....	—	1	—
Cincinnati .....	—	1	1
Cleveland .....	5	—	—
Columbus .....	1	—	—
Dayton .....	1	—	—
Toledo .....	1	—	—
Oklahoma State .....	—	—	1
Oregon .....	—	1	—
Erie .....	1	—	—
Harrisburg .....	1	—	—
Lehigh Valley.....	1	—	—
Northeastern Pennsylvania .....	—	—	1
Philadelphia .....	4	—	—
Pittsburgh .....	3	—	—
Reading .....	1	—	—
Rhode Island State.....	—	1	—
South Carolina State.....	1	—	—
Memphis .....	—	—	1
Nashville .....	—	1	—
North Texas.....	1	—	—
South Texas.....	—	1	—
Salt Lake City.....	—	1	—
Lynchburg-Roanoke .....	—	—	1
Richmond .....	—	1	—
Seattle-Tacoma .....	—	1	—
Madison .....	—	1	—
Milwaukee .....	—	2	—
New York State Council.....	2	—	—
Pennsylvania Division .....	2	—	—
Ohio State Council.....	2	—	—
Non-Chapter .....	6	2	3
Totals .....	83	39	16

### Notice to All Members

The rate of \$7.50 for dues which was voted at the Delegate Meeting and which applies both to full members and to junior members, goes into effect July 1, 1935. Full members and junior members who are billed for dues in July will therefore receive bills for \$7.50, and those paying in other quarters will be billed for the larger amount at the time when they are regularly billed for dues.

The higher dues of \$7.50, for which members will ordinarily be billed, include \$6.00 in national and \$1.50 in chapter dues. Where a chapter sets dues higher or lower than \$1.50, members of the chapter will be billed for the combined total of national and chapter dues, whatever it may be (e.g. if chapter dues are \$2.00, members will be billed for a total of \$8.00; if chapter dues are \$3.00, members will be billed for a total of \$9.00).

### Chapter Chairmen Meet at Montreal

FOR the second time this year a meeting of the chairmen of AASW chapters was scheduled at a time when an AASW program insured national representation. The first occasion was that of the February, 1935, Delegate Conference of the Association.

At Montreal Father Geary, chairman of the Buffalo Chapter, arranged the meeting with a plan to discuss the following topics; Resumé of the previous meeting of chapter chairmen; chapter committee work; relationship between the chapter and the national office; chapter finances; relationship between AASW chapters, social workers' clubs and guilds; and chapter activity in the political field.

Thirty-seven chapters were represented at the meeting. Several members of national committees and two members of the national office staff also attended.

Discussion of chapter committee work naturally brought out wide variations between chapters with well defined policies on committee and study group functioning, and chapters with scattered membership, limited meetings and fluctuating committees.

Some of the successful experience in state chapter organization with use made of correspondence and council representation suggested answers to certain questions raised about the need to strengthen relationships with non-chapter members.

Limited experience with and further need for chapter executive secretarial services were discussed in connection with chapter accomplishment. Some difficulty was expressed as to ways and means of tying local issues in with AASW national program. The majority of chapters seemed to feel that it is definitely helpful to local programs to relate their committee work to committee projects in the national program.

Experience in one national division which has depended upon chapter sub-committees to do the groundwork on subject matter was suggested by one chapter chairman as a pattern that might be useful as between state chapters and scattered members.

It was indicated that extensive use is made of material going to chapters from the national office. Chapter committees are in some instances charged with responsibility for suggesting the local application and use of material received. Value was attached to the national office digest of chapter minutes.



The national organization, regarded as a federation of chapters, and also the interdependency of chapters, were matters emphasized by one chapter as of primary importance in the present transitional stage looking toward a properly financed, responsible membership organization in the social work field. Discussion related this view to increased dues that would strengthen chapter as well as national revenue for programs of a type that would draw the membership throughout the country into active participation.

The Association's Delegate Conference was mentioned as having added tremendous zest to the professional organization because it is not a meeting of the national but a meeting of members from the national and the chapters.

Consideration of the integration of local and national planning and of the importance of a membership which realizes that the program is a professional necessity, led to suggestions on the use of individual chapter members in sending out material on certain subjects from the national, and the need for local response to material that is sent out to determine what is of most value in meeting varying needs. National interest and activities, it was urged, can have meaning only in so far as they are applied to social work where it is being done locally all over the country; national activity and local problems are two aspects of the same thing.

In spite of the interest in contacts between the national office and individual chapter members, it was agreed that material sent to the chapters should be disseminated through the chairmen who are necessarily responsible for the use of the material.

Chapter bulletins and annual reports have been useful in relating chapter and national material.

The need for more extensive chapter visiting by the staff was discussed, together with the problem of time required in the office to keep in motion the machinery to perpetuate the organization.

Discussion of chapter finances occasioned a number of accounts of budgetary difficulties, the advantages and disadvantages of outside activities for purpose of raising funds, proposed activity for getting chapter contributing and sustaining memberships over and above any increased basic dues and plans for apportionment of chapter dues to state organizations.

Certain points led to staff interpretation of the present status of AASW finances. The Association started as a national organization and had to find its way into the chapters which now have established a major position. Chapter financing being different in every chapter means a certain test of ability to see each other's problems. There

has been an increase of over 50% in membership in three years. The establishment of chapter programs in cities where the greatest membership increase has taken place requires an up-to-date budgetary system. Inability to compel payment of chapter dues has so far prevented chapters from planning and budgeting their programs. Under the plan for increased dues chapter membership will be compulsory, which will greatly increase the strength of the chapters. National membership is a necessity because it constitutes certification in social work today. Development of interest in professional participation has lagged in the chapters, so that there is an immediate need to equip ourselves to push activities and face issues that confront the professional organization. In order to do this the obstacles which stand in the way of the development of chapter programs must be removed. Until this is done, the static part of the membership will continue to enjoy the greatest value of national membership (certification) and a profit by what is being done by the dynamic part of the membership which is carrying the load in the chapters and increasing the status of social work.

### *Practitioners Discuss Case Work in Mass Relief Programs*

THE Practitioner Sections of the AASW Chapters held a luncheon meeting at the Montreal Conference at which a report by the New York group, "Some Beliefs About the Role of Case Work in Public Mass Relief Administration," provided the basis for discussion.

The paper attempted a very difficult task covering the consideration of such diverse matters as: existing convictions as to the area in which case work is effective; current trends in case work; their applicability to a vast relief program; the varying demands of the public; and the origin and objectives of the mass relief program itself.

These are obviously difficult to discuss unless they can be related to a central consideration or hypothesis. The paper sketched many existing tendencies and opinions. It suggested conclusions which rest more upon criteria within present cultural and political aspects of the situation than upon criteria within the tested or projected function of case work in public mass relief administration.

The paper limited the present character of case work to an emphasis on psychological treatment, with certain older functions retained in the realm of relief giving, informational services, custodial and other supervisory services for the handicapped. Services involving adjustment through



individual psychological therapy were separated out from other services and recommended as proper normal community functions to be divorced from relief giving.

Services meeting such needs as health, employment and maintenance were ear-marked as being pertinent to a mass relief program and as being within the capacities of staff personnel lacking previous experience, but working under professional supervision.

The paper placed upon case work the responsibility for effecting good staff working conditions relative to staff security. Also upon case work was placed responsibility for working out objective criteria which would be used to judge adequate staff performance as the test of competence and therefore of tenure.

Transfer of personnel showing inadequate performance, training and development on the job and also further selection on some academic basis were suggested as practices which should accompany the utilization of existing personnel in mass relief programs.

Case work was charged with the responsibility for training this personnel through courses which would acquaint them with the views and methods of case work, with professional philosophy, their own role in relief, with social resources and with an understanding of behavior. The goal of such training, it was suggested, is good performance on a limited scale.

Case work knowledge, it was thought, is necessary to the function of considering applications for relief.

At the same time, case work was accused of failure to sift and adapt its methods to the unemployment situation. The difficulty was attributed to individual psychological treatment methods and to neglect in the realm of purely social direction for the unemployed. Such skilled guidance as had proved of value to certain clients, the paper suggested, had been accidental and "as result of professional habit," rather than as "result of a planned program."

The place of case work in a mass relief program, it was stated, could be considered only after an analysis had been made of the conflicting interests of the public and the conflicting bases of the program itself. Some of the conflicting interests discussed were: interest of the controlling public in efficiency and minimum budgets; interest of a powerful minority in conserving the existing economic order; concern of political office holders to reconcile conflicting interests in order to keep themselves in power; interest of relief recipients and those on the fringe in continued and adequate maintenance (with mass pressure their only recourse for securing it); and professional social

work interest representing diverse aims and confusing alignments between controlling power and recipient groups.

Effectiveness and continued existence of the mass relief program depend primarily, according to this paper, upon the identification of social service staff, investigators and other employees with the unemployed recipient group and their needs. The only other choice that was thought to be open was characterized as opportunism disguised as detachment and actually in the interest of the controlling group. Upon this latter choice, it was suggested, rests responsibility for the present inadequacy of relief, measures to contract expenditures and political interference.

#### DISCUSSION

A further report was made of discussion of the foregoing paper by a study group of the New York Chapter.

In that group, interest had been expressed in the study of case work as it manifests itself in law, medicine, etc., as well as in social work. For the time being, however, the group had concentrated upon the training of workers inexperienced in social case work who are now on relief organization staffs. They had begun by trying to relate the essentials of the job to what may be inherent in social case work in an effort to reduce this to a layman's understanding. Their proposed study of Home Relief case material and training program has led to an interest in the possibility of including in the group staff members who cannot meet AASW requirements.

Discussion from the floor of the luncheon meeting indicated interest in broad participation in such studies through liaison groups, including practitioners of any status.

The conviction was expressed that a definition of case work is needed which does not limit the process to one of therapy.

When the suggestion was made that a public relief program might be replaced by a security program, it was brought out that, unlike a social insurance program, relief programs depend mainly upon the client to establish eligibility, which in turn requires that the worker meeting the client have a knowledge of case work methods.

Distinction between what is required in application and in home interviews was therefore thought questionable.

Attention was called to the approach being made by some voluntary associations of investigators and to the assistance that might be given to them, especially by their supervisors in staff conference discussion of cases.

Mention was made of the AASW proposal for some form of provision membership which might bridge the gap between its membership and others



in the field who are interested in attaining professional status. A show of hands of the large number present at the meeting indicated almost unanimous opinion in favor of reopening discussion of such a plan.

### *Elections Still Coming!*

Officers and committees of the Association which are elected annually have usually been announced at the time of the National Conference of Social Work, as the votes were taken at the time of the Association's annual meeting.

This year, however, the vote will be taken by mail and every member will have an opportunity to vote. Due to several reasons there have been delays in completing the report of the Nominating Committee, but it will be ready to announce soon. Thereafter time will be allowed for additional nominations by the membership and after that for voting by the membership. The old officers and elected committee members will continue in their present positions until after the elections.

The members of the Nominating Committee are: Stanley P. Davies, chairman, New York; Florence Sytz, New Orleans; Grace Ferguson, Iowa City; Louise Drury, Los Angeles; and Paul T. Beisser, Baltimore.

### *Two Religions*

*The Compass* and the admirable *News Letter* of the Chicago Council of Social Agencies disagree apparently on the place of "religions" and "high priestesses" in social work.

*The News Letter* of June 24 reporting vividly and well on the Montreal Conference characterizes Mary van Kleeck and Grace Marcus as the high priestesses of two different religions at the Montreal Conference. The point at which *The Compass* takes issue with the Chicago Council's *News Letter* is in the *News Letter's* statement that:

"We know that neither religion had been able to warp the Conference out of proportion nor make it other than what it was—a huge open forum for the expression of every opinion. . . . Whenever rank-and-filers insisted on talking out of turn they were as firmly dealt with as a mental hygiene addict would have been had he demanded ten minutes of mental health in the middle of a meeting on group statistics."

In all humility it is extremely difficult for social work to be certain when a rank-and-filer is speaking out of turn or to know when ten minutes are too many for a meeting on group statistics to devote to mental health aspects of the subject. The end purpose of "open forum for the expression of every opinion" is surely not the open forum itself, but the use to which every opinion

can be put. Religions in all times and places have presumably taken root only as they had meaning to people in their several cultural settings. This being so, it is not necessary to worry about doctrines warping the conference.

It may be that Miss van Kleeck and Miss Marcus represent what might be called two "religions." It would seem useful for social work to apply itself to an understanding of the implications for social work in the new kind of alignment advocated by Miss van Kleeck. Similarly the useful thing for social work would be to understand Miss Marcus's description of the present status of social case work in the light of its background and its current process, both of which involve the problems of adapting some of the content of contributing sciences.

An editorial in the current issue of *The Family* on the Montreal Conference puts it in this way: ". . . Our tendency to deny the realities of others and cling to our own limited fragment as if it were the whole. . . . Social case work, to take one subject that was presented from the point of view of varied reality situations, is less than itself if it fails to take into its stream not only the concepts described by Grace Marcus, Elizabeth Dexter, Susan Burlingham, Florence Day, Madeleine Moore and others, but also the experiences of those administering relief, the concepts of the group worker whose area is the release of the individual through creative group activity, and the purpose of social action."

One thing Miss van Kleeck and Miss Marcus have in common is a concern for certain things that cut across the whole field of social work. In the interest of professional growth social workers should not fail to try to understand things of that calibre.

—C. C. R.

### *Conference on Personnel in Public Service*

Growing out of the activities of the Association's Committee on Civil Service of which A. Wayne McMillen is chairman, a group of professional and civic organizations, with a common interest in qualified personnel in public service, were called together by Louis Brownlow of the Public Administration Clearing House in a conference held on May 17. Developments growing out of this conference, which recognized the need for continuous exchange of thinking and experience in the promotion of career systems, will be reported on from time to time in *The Compass*. A committee of three was appointed, representing the American Public Health Association, the National Recreation Association and the AASW, to consider further the major objectives of any joint undertaking in this field.



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